

# Naval Fleet Auxiliary Force



The U.S. Navy's

**MILITARY·SEALIFT·COMMAND**

The Naval Fleet Auxiliary Force is composed of:

Fleet Replenishment Oilers

Ammunition Ships

Fast Combat Support Ships

Combat Stores Ships

Dry Cargo/Ammunition Ships

Fleet Ocean Tugs

Rescue and Salvage Ships

Hospital Ships

Commercial Helicopter Services



# Naval Fleet Auxiliary Force

The approximately 40 ships of Military Sealift Command's Naval Fleet Auxiliary Force are the supply lines to U.S. Navy ships at sea. These ships provide virtually everything that Navy ships need, including fuel, food, ordnance, spare parts, mail and other supplies. NFAF ships enable the Navy fleet to remain at sea, on station and combat ready for extended periods of time. NFAF ships also conduct towing, rescue and salvage operations or serve as floating medical facilities.

All NFAF ships are government owned and crewed by civil service mariners. Some of the ships also have a small contingent of Navy personnel aboard for operations support, supply coordination and helicopter operations.



*Guided missile destroyer USS Hopper (left) receives stores from MSC fleet replenishment oiler USNS John Ericsson during a connected replenishment in the Pacific Ocean.*

*Mariners aboard MSC fleet replenishment oiler USNS Patuxent conduct a refueling mission with a Navy warship at sea.*



### **Fleet Replenishment Oilers**

Fleet replenishment oilers, the largest subset of Naval Fleet Auxiliary Force ships, provide fuel to deployed Navy ships at sea, as well as to their assigned aircraft. Oilers and the ships they refuel sail side by side as fuel hoses are extended across guide wires. Underway replenishment of fuel dramatically extends the time a Navy battle group can remain at sea.

### **Ammunition Ships**

Ammunition ships supply ordnance to Navy combatants at sea, providing service through a combination of along-side transfers and vertical replenishment lifts via helicopter.

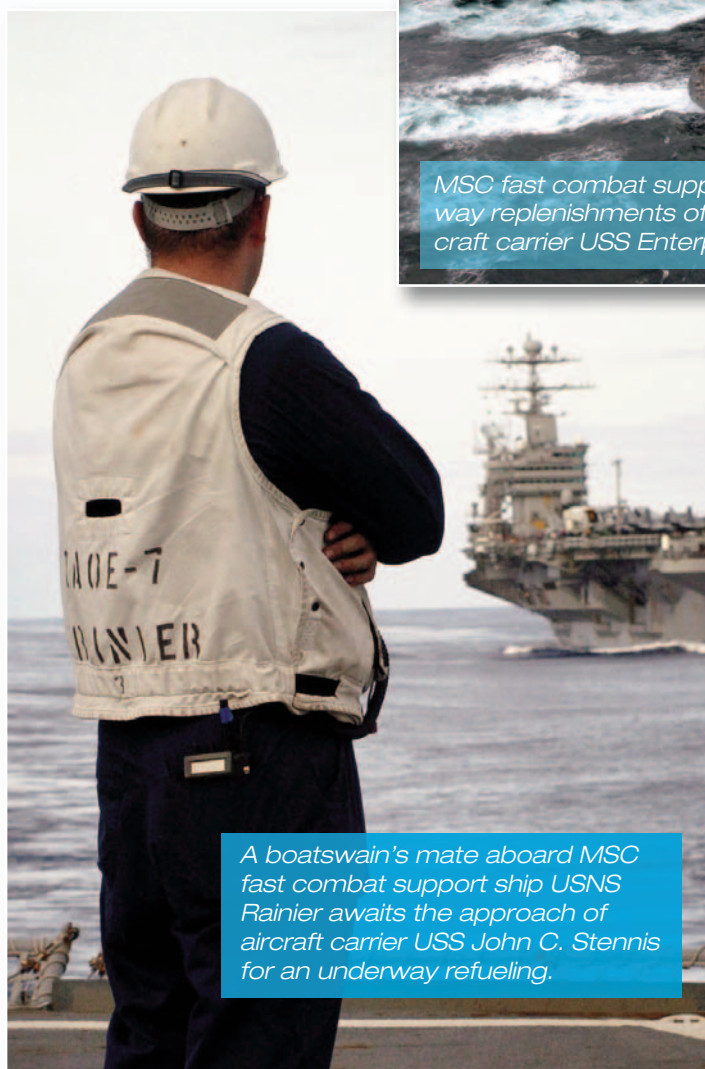


*A Navy helicopter prepares to move ordnance from MSC ammunition ship USNS Flint to another Navy ship during a vertical replenishment at sea.*





*MSC fast combat support ship USNS Supply (middle) conducts dual underway replenishments of guided-missile frigate USS Taylor (bottom) and aircraft carrier USS Enterprise (top).*



*A boatswain's mate aboard MSC fast combat support ship USNS Rainier awaits the approach of aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis for an underway refueling.*

### **Fast Combat Support Ships**

MSC's four fast combat support ships provide one-stop shopping to the fleet for fuel, ammunition, food and other cargo. These ships are especially valuable because of their speed and ability to carry all the essentials to replenish Navy ships at sea. MSC's fast combat support ships, formerly sailor-operated, transferred to MSC for civil service crewing beginning in 2001.





*Crew members from MSC fast combat support ship USNS Rainier load relief supplies onto a helicopter bound for tsunami victims in Indonesia.*



*A house lies on its side in Sumatra, Indonesia, one of the coastal areas hit by a massive tsunami.*





*Civil service mariners aboard an MSC combat stores ship transfer pallets to MSC fast combat support ship USNS Rainier during an underway replenishment operation.*

### **Combat Stores Ships**

Combat stores ships provide underway replenishment of supplies needed aboard Navy combatant ships at sea. Supplies include repair parts, spare parts, food, mail and fuel.

Combat stores ships are being replaced by MSC's new Lewis and Clark-class of dry cargo/ammunition ships.





Arrayed with streamers, balloons and bunting, MSC dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS Richard E. Byrd slides stern-first into San Diego harbor at the ship's christening ceremony in 2007.



## Dry Cargo/Ammunition Ships

MSC dry cargo/ammunition ship USNS Lewis and Clark, delivered in 2006, is the first of a new class of up to eleven ships dedicated to MSC's Naval Fleet Auxiliary Force. These ships are able to deliver

ammunition, provisions, stores, spare parts, potable water and petroleum products to the Navy's carrier strike groups and other naval forces worldwide.

Designed to operate for extended periods at sea, the Lewis and Clark-class ships have improved cargo-handling equipment that increases efficiency and makes the ships more cost effective to operate and maintain.

All the Lewis and Clark-class ships will be named after great American explorers.

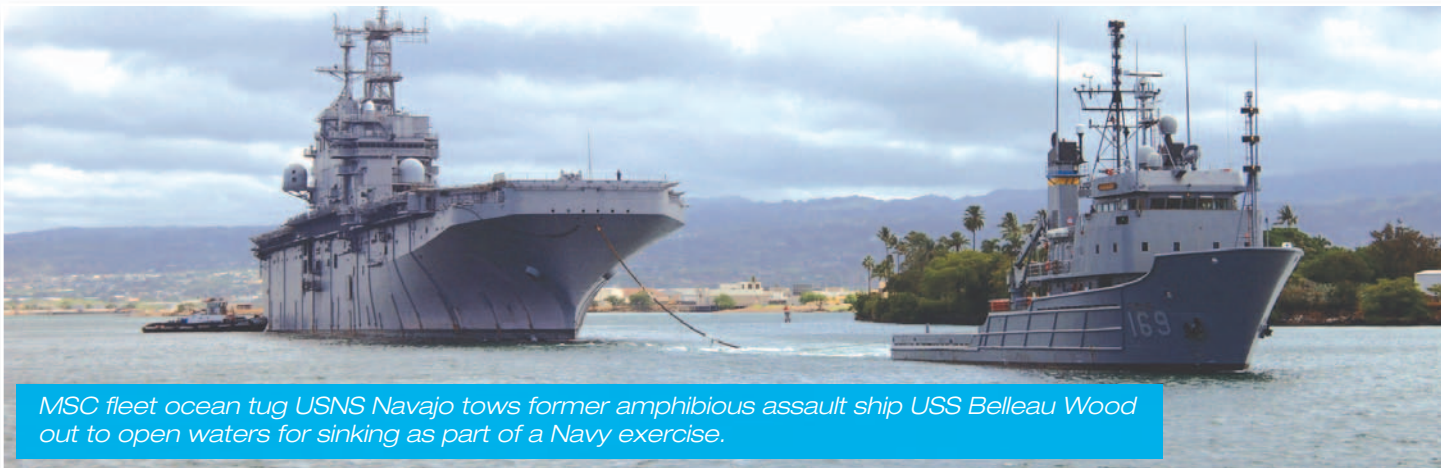


*USNS Lewis and Clark is the first of MSC's dry cargo/ammunition ships named for American explorers.*



*A matron of honor observes as distant great-grandnieces of Sacagawea christen the ship that bears their courageous ancestor's name.*





*MSC fleet ocean tug USNS Navajo tows former amphibious assault ship USS Belleau Wood out to open waters for sinking as part of a Navy exercise.*

## Fleet Ocean Tugs

MSC's fleet ocean tugs include USNS Apache, USNS Sioux, USNS Navajo and USNS Catawba. These ships provide the Navy fleet with towing service and can tow Navy vessels as large as battle-

ships. When augmented by Navy divers, fleet ocean tugs assist in the recovery of downed ships and aircraft.

## Rescue and Salvage Ships

MSC's four rescue and salvage ships recover objects from the sea, tow stranded vessels and provide firefighting assistance. These ships, USNS Grasp, USNS Grapple, USNS Salvor and USNS Safeguard, like fleet ocean tugs, are able to lift objects as heavy as downed ships and aircraft. The key advantage of these ships is their ability to rapidly deploy divers to conduct rescue and salvage operations.



*MSC rescue and salvage ship USNS Grasp tows the decommissioned cruiser Des Moines to Brownsville, Texas.*





## Hospital Ships

MSC's Naval Fleet Auxiliary Force operates the Navy's two hospital ships, USNS Comfort and USNS Mercy, each containing 12 operating rooms and up to 1,000 beds. The ships are normally kept pierside in reduced operating status, each with a small contingent of MSC civil service mariners and Navy hospital personnel aboard to ensure the ships are ready should they be needed. When called into action, they can get underway in five days with an expanded crew of more than 60 civil service mariners and an expanded medical staff of up to approximately 1,200 military medical personnel.

In June 2007, USNS Comfort, based in Baltimore, deployed on a humanitarian mission to Latin America and the Caribbean to provide medical care to more than 98,000 patients.

In 2006, USNS Mercy, based in San Diego, made a five-month deployment to nations in the Pacific Islands as well as South and Southeast Asia. The ship provided humanitarian and civic assistance, including medical care for local residents and improvements and repairs to local hospitals and schools.

*MSC hospital ship USNS Comfort gets underway for a four-month humanitarian assistance deployment to Latin America and the Caribbean in June 2007.*






### Commercial Helicopters

MSC's support to the fleet took a major step forward in 2000 when, for the first time, a commercial helicopter detachment provided vertical replenishment services aboard two MSC combat stores ships deployed to the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf. This was previously done only by Navy helicopters. The service was so successful that it was expanded in 2006 to include service in Guam. With the addition of dry cargo/ammunition ships to MSC's fleet in 2006, commercial helicopters began operating with this new platform. The commercial aircraft free up Navy active duty sailors to focus on the critical war-fighting missions for which they were trained.



A high-angle, close-up shot from the perspective of a helicopter's landing gear or hoist system, looking down at the flight deck of the USS Ronald Reagan. The deck is a flat, light-colored surface with various markings and equipment. In the background, the ship's superstructure, including masts and radar domes, is visible against a clear blue sky. To the right, another ship, the USNS Flint, is seen from a distance, with a helicopter hovering above its deck. The ocean is a deep blue with white wake from the ships.

*A Navy helicopter prepares to land on the flight deck of aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan during a weapons transfer between Reagan and MSC ammunition ship USNS Flint (right) in the Western Pacific in April 2007.*



## NFAF: Past, Present And Future

The Naval Fleet Auxiliary Force was created in 1972 with the transfer of Navy fleet oiler USS Taluga to MSC operation after a series of tests proved that civil service crews could operate the Navy's fleet support ships as effectively and more cost efficiently than Navy sailors.

MSC now provides all of the Navy's combat logistics services to the fleet.

In the years to come, MSC's Naval Fleet Auxiliary Force will continue to be a vital, cost-effective and innovative element of the U.S. Navy, actively supporting the Navy's combat readiness and ability to project a powerful forward presence.



*USNS Taluga (left) the first MSC civilian mariner-crewed oiler, became MSC's first NFAF ship in 1972.*

*Aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (left) and guided-missile cruiser USS Anzio (right) take on supplies from MSC fast combat support ship USNS Arctic (center) in the Atlantic Ocean.*







*USNS Richard E. Byrd, under construction in San Diego in January 2007, is one of up to 11 dry cargo/ammunition ships being built for MSC's Naval Fleet Auxiliary Force. Byrd is the fourth in the Lewis and Clark-class of ships, which are all named for famous American explorers.*

*Back cover: An aircraft carrier and a guided missile destroyer take on fuel from MSC fleet replenishment oiler USNS Guadalupe in the Western Pacific Ocean.*



# MSC delivers



[www.msc.navy.mil](http://www.msc.navy.mil)